

# Investigating spiritual well-being among Islamic Divinity and Religious Education students in Turkey

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## Abstract

In light of increased emphasis on universities being called to facilitate spiritual growth among students, the Spiritual Health And Life-Orientation Measure was used to assess four domains of spiritual well-being among 122 Divinity and 137 Religious Education students in Turkey. Students provided three responses to 20 items reflecting spiritual well-being, indicating their ideals for spiritual well-being, lived experience and how much university helped in each area. Another 16 potential factors were explored to help students develop their spiritual well-being, ranging from self-improvement to scripture. High scores on ideals for spiritual well-being, reported by both groups of students, underpin the lived experiences of Religious Education & Divinity students in each of four domains of spiritual well-being. Relating with God significantly influenced aspects of spiritual well-being but it appears that the highly religious students overstate the influence of religious activities, such as prayer and scripture, on their spiritual well-being. Universities provide small yet significant support in developing the four domains of spiritual well-being for these students. Overall, this study has shown many similarities, yet some significant variations in spiritual well-being between these Divinity and Religious Education students in Turkey. This project provides a sound base from which future studies can be launched to review, enhance and monitor university students' spiritual well-being and to determine the influence of these students' spiritual well-being on the clients they will serve after graduating and gaining employment.

## Keywords

Spirituality; assessment; higher education

## Introduction

There has been an emerging emphasis on universities, especially in America, to embrace spirituality of students and staff to bring emotions and spirit to their teaching, together with the intellect (Palmer, 1998), with calls to open dialogue on spirituality and religion in academia (Nash, 1999) and ideas for tertiary institutions to amplify their programs to encourage increased authenticity and spiritual growth (Chickering, Dalton & Stamm, 2006). Astin, Astin and Lindholm (2011) have reported longitudinal research that showed a lessening in religiosity, but increase in spirituality among students in their time at American universities. Closer scrutiny of the place of spirituality in education has been called for in other countries (de Souza et al., 2009).

A person's spirituality lies at the heart of who they are as a human being (McCarroll, O'Connor & Meakes, 2005). In an attempt to integrate divergent views which abound, Palmer described spirituality as 'the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our egos – with our own souls, with one another, with the worlds of history and nature, with the invisible winds of the spirit, with the mystery of being alive' (1999, p.6). As such, it is not surprising to note that spirituality has been shown to relate with health. In fact, it has been proposed that spiritual health is a, if not the, fundamental dimension of health that permeates and integrates all other dimensions, such as physical, mental,

social and emotional health, as well as vocational health (Fisher, 1998, 2011). Spiritual health is a state of being, which is revealed in practice as spiritual well-being (SWB).

Several theoretical frameworks posit spirituality and spiritual well-being comprising four domains, which themselves are reflected in the quality of relationships that people have with themselves (Personal SWB), with others (Communal SWB), with the environment (Environmental SWB), and/or with a Transcendent Other (Transcendental SWB) (NICA, 1975; Hay & Nye, 1998; Fisher, 1998). The Spiritual Health And Life-Orientation Measure (SHALOM) is a quantitative instrument designed to assess these four domains of spiritual well-being (Fisher, 2010). It has undergone extensive psychometric testing (Gomez & Fisher, 2003) and has been sought for use in over 200 studies in 20 different languages (Fisher, 2010).

As each person embraces each of these four domains of SWB to varying extents, SHALOM provides domain scores for each of them, rather than taking an overall score for SWB. In fact, SHALOM goes one step further in that it elicits each person's ideals in each domain and compares these with each person's lived experience, so they become the standard against which their level of spiritual harmony or dissonance is assessed. The Islamic religion embraces three of these four dimensions to organize and adjust relationships that all human beings have. These are between God, humans and the Universe (environment) (e.g., Surah 2 verse 177 and Surah 88 verses 17-20, from the holy book Qur'an).

Previous studies have not only elicited scores for these four domains of SWB, they have also sought feedback from respondents on factors that they perceive help develop their own spiritual well-being (Fisher, Barnes & Marks, 2009; Fisher & Wong, 2013). This study reports on an investigation of spiritual well-being among Divinity and Religious Education students in universities in Turkey. The research questions thus became:

1. Is there any significant difference between SWB levels of Divinity and Religious Education students in each of four domains of SWB?
2. What kind of variables effect or support SWB levels of Divinity and Religious Education students in each domain? Are there any differences?
3. Is there any significant difference in levels of help that Divinity and Religious Education students receive from their institutions?

## Method

### Participants

Mainly senior students were randomly selected from Divinity and Religious Education faculties in five universities, situated in the East, West, North, South and centre of

Turkey. Surveys were completed by 259 university students, comprised of 122 Divinity students and 137 Religious Education students, 187 of whom were female and 72 male; 26 were in first year, 5 in second year, 121 in third year and 107 in fourth year. The sample size is small considering students were recruited from five universities. Further investigation is warranted with larger numbers of students to see how representative this sample is of the whole.

### Instruments

Spiritual well-being was assessed using SHALOM, a 20-item questionnaire that sought three responses for each item. The responses indicated the importance of each item for each respondent's 'ideals' and 'lived experience' for spiritual well-being, as well as the 'level of help' they believe they obtain from the university in each area, scored on a 6-point Likert scale, from 0 = not at all, to 5 = very high. There were five items in each of four domains of spiritual well-being: those reflecting Personal SWB were sense of identity, self-awareness, joy in life, inner peace, meaning in life; for Communal SWB, they were love of other people, forgiveness toward others, trust between individuals, respect for others, kindness towards other people; for Environmental SWB, they were connection with nature, awe at a breathtaking view, oneness with nature, harmony with the environment, sense of 'magic' in the environment; for Transcendental SWB, they were personal relationship with the Divine/God, worship of the Creator, oneness with God, peace with God, prayer life. Domain scores were calculated by taking the mean value of responses to the five items in each domain.

A number of factors which help university students develop their spiritual well-being have been investigated in other studies (Fisher, Barnes & Marks, 2009; Fisher & Wong, 2013). Sixteen of these factors were selected to seek respondents' views. These factors were self-improvement, timeout, being happy, family, helping others, friends, walks, nature, music, meditation, sport, prayer, counseling, pastor, religious activity and scripture. Each of these factors was scored on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = very low to 5 = very high, in terms of importance.

Demographic details were also sought regarding gender, course, year of study, how often students attend religious group or place, where they want to work after graduation, where they get religious knowledge, and their perception of family's economical status.

### Procedure

Following approvals from the five universities, the heads of departments of Divinity and Religious Education conducted the surveys with the selected students. These surveys took place between 10 March and 10 June 2011.

## Analyses

SPSS for Windows version 19 was used to record frequencies and distribution of data in factors, cross-tabulations, calculation of means, independent and matched pairs t-tests, factor analyses and regression analyses, as appropriate.

## Results

### Factor analysis of SHALOM

The 20 items of the SHALOM scale were subjected to principal components analysis (PCA) using SPSS for Windows Version 19. Prior to performing PCA, the suitability of data for factor analysis was assessed. Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed many coefficients of 0.3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin value was 0.92, exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.6 (Kaiser, 1974) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett, 1954) reached statistical significance, supporting the factorisability of the correlation matrix.

PCA revealed the presence of four components with eigenvalues exceeding 1.0, explaining 43.0%, 8.3%, 6.0% and 5.7% of the variance respectively. The four-component solution explained a total of 63% of the variance. These results support the four factor solution of SHALOM as has been shown in previous studies (Fisher, 2010).

### Research question 1. Spiritual well-being scores

#### Variations by course

The Religious Education students reported significantly higher levels of lived experience than Divinity students for Personal, Communal and Transcendental SWB and almost reached significance for Environmental SWB as well. However Divinity students claimed they received greater help from university in relating with God, which is not reflected in their ideals, nor lived experience, of relating with God (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Levels of spiritual well-being among Turkish Divinity & Religious Education students**

Domain of SWB	Group	category of SWB								
		a. ideal			b. lived experience			c. help from uni		
		mean	SD	t <sup>sig</sup>	mean	SD	t <sup>sig</sup>	mean	SD	t <sup>sig</sup>
Per	Div	4.56	.63	-.83 <sup>ns</sup>	4.03	.79	-2.01*	2.67	1.19	.90 <sup>ns</sup>
	RE	4.62	.55		4.22	.77		2.54	1.19	
Com	Div	4.44	.61	-2.74**	4.05	.72	-3.09**	2.74	1.19	1.37 <sup>ns</sup>
	RE	4.63	.49		4.31	.62		2.55	1.07	
Env	Div	4.18	.77	-.87 <sup>ns</sup>	3.88	.76	-1.94 <sup>ns</sup>	2.29	1.23	.46 <sup>ns</sup>
	RE	4.26	.76		4.07	.81		2.22	1.18	
Tra	Div	4.74	.52	-1.31 <sup>ns</sup>	4.22	.77	-2.19*	2.93	1.25	2.40*
	RE	4.83	.51		4.43	.75		2.56	1.25	

\*p<.05; \*\*p<.01 Per = Personal, Com = Communal, Env = Environmental, Tra = Transcendental domains of SWB

Matched pairs t-tests were used to compare the mean scores on two different categories for the same group of students. This technique revealed that the Divinity and Religious Education students' ideals for spiritual well-being were higher than their lived experience, in keeping with other studies (Fisher, Barnes & Marks, 2009; Fisher & Wong, 2013). Lived experience was rated significantly higher than help from university on the four domains of SWB, for both groups. It was interesting to note that none of the respondents selected the zero score option for any of the 20 items on ideals and lived experience for spiritual well-being. This was the first time that this choice had been made available using SHALOM. This is also the first report of students' perceived help from university being assessed using a third column in SHALOM.

#### Other variables, such as gender and background

Minor variations were observed by gender. Independent t-tests showed that the female students held higher ideals than the males in each of four domains of SWB (tper(259)=-3.99, p<.001, tcom(259)=-2.49, p<.05, tenv(259)=-2.64, p<.05, ttra(259)=-3.21, p<.01)). However, their lived experience was only slightly higher than the males in two of the domains of SWB (tenv(259)=-1.99, p<.05, tper(259)=-2.20, p<.05).

Other demographic variables yielded no significant results on studies of SWB. These were year level, how often students attend religious groups or places, where they want to work after graduation, who provides their religious education and family's perceived economic status. These findings are not surprising as these two groups of students came from similar cultural and religious backgrounds. For example, 90% of them came from religious high schools that provide both science and basic religious knowledge.

## Research question 2. Helps for spiritual well-being

The rank order of helps reported by the Divinity and Religious Education students is very similar, with the greatest help reported from religious influence of prayer and scripture (see Table 2). Family, helping others, being happy, friends and self-improvement were all scored highly, with mean values above 4.0 on scales from 1 to 5.

**Table 2. Levels of help for SWB among Turkish Divinity & Religious Education students**

Help	Group	
	Div	RE
prayer	4.73	4.84
scripture	4.72	4.82
family	4.61	4.56
help others	4.60	4.65
be happy	4.42	4.45
friends	4.09	4.25
self-improvement	4.09	4.07
nature	3.97	3.97
counseling	3.91	3.91
religious activity	3.80	4.15
time out	3.74	3.69
pastor	3.43	3.53
walks	3.11	3.23
music	3.11	2.92
sport	2.56	2.45
meditation	1.82	1.72

NB mean values are reported on a scale from 1-5.

Nature, counseling and religious activity, time out and pastor also appear to provide important help for these students' SWB. Walks and music are personal pursuits that are reported to have moderate influence on their SWB, with sport influencing some. The very low score for meditation is not surprising, because Muslims do not practice it. They find it unnecessary, as praying five times a day is sufficient religious practice. In Islam, praying means getting close to God with Muslims accepting mosques as God's home (Al-Shareef, 2001).

## Research questions 2 & 3. Analysis of helps for SWB among Divinity & RE students

Despite the high levels of importance attributed by students to many of the above factors, most of them did not correlate highly ( $r > .50$ ) with lived experience in the four domains of SWB. Only nature correlated highly ( $r = .56$ ) with lived experience of Environmental SWB.

### Personal SWB

'In hierarchical regression, independent variables are entered into the equation (in steps or blocks) in the order

specified by the researcher on theoretical grounds. Each independent variable is assessed in terms of what it adds to the prediction of the dependent variable, after the previous variables have been controlled for' (Pallant, 2007, p.147). Hierarchical multiple regression was used here to assess contributions made to Personal SWB by gender and the helps listed above (at Step 1), perceived help from university (at Step 2), by other domains of lived experience (at Step 3) and ideals for Personal SWB (at Step 4).

*Among Divinity students.* Based on an inspection of correlation values, family, nature and religious activities were entered at Step1, explaining 22% of the variance in the lived experience of Personal SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 59.2%,  $F(8,113) = 20.5$ ,  $p < .001$ , with three control measures being statistically significant, namely relation with God ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), ideals for Personal SWB ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and help from university ( $\beta = .14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Although relation with others showed a beta value of .18, it just missed significance, with  $p = .054$ .

*Among RE students.* Based on an inspection of independent t-tests and correlation values, gender, self-improvement and religious activities were entered at Step1, explaining 21% of the variance in the lived experience of Personal SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 78.7%,  $F(8,128) = 59.1$ ,  $p < .001$ , with five control measures being statistically significant, namely relation with God ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p < .001$ ), relation with others ( $\beta = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ), help from university ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $p < .01$ ), ideals for Personal SWB ( $\beta = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and religious activities ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### Communal SWB

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess contributions made to Communal SWB by the helps listed above (at Step 1), perceived help from university (at Step 2), by other domains of lived experience (at Step 3) and ideals for Communal SWB (at Step 4).

*Among Divinity students.* Based on an inspection of correlation values, family and helping others were entered at Step1, explaining 21% of the variance in the lived experience of Communal SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 63.0%,  $F(7,114) = 27.8$ ,  $p < .001$ , with five control measures being statistically significant, namely relation with environment ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $p < .001$ ), relationship with self ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), ideals for Communal SWB ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ), help others ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and help from university ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

*Among RE students.* Based on an inspection of correlation values, help others and religious activities were entered at Step1, explaining 26% of the variance in the lived experience of Communal SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 72.8%,  $F(7,129) = 49.3$ ,  $p < .001$ , with five control measures being statistically significant, namely relation with self ( $\beta = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ), relation with environment ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ), ideals for Communal SWB



(beta = .20,  $p < .01$ ), religious activities (beta = .14,  $p < .05$ ) and help others (beta = .13,  $p < .05$ ).

### **Environmental SWB**

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess contributions made to Environmental SWB by the helps listed above (at Step 1), perceived help from university (at Step 2), by other domains of lived experience (at Step 3) and ideals for Environmental SWB (at Step 4).

*Among Divinity students.* Based on an inspection of correlation values, family, nature and meditation were entered at Step1, explaining 40% of the variance in the lived experience of Environmental SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 74.8%,  $F(8,113) = 41.9$ ,  $p < .001$ , with four control measures being statistically significant, namely ideals for Environmental SWB (beta = .36,  $p < .001$ ), relationship with others (beta = .32,  $p < .001$ ), nature (beta = .23,  $p < .001$ ) and relationship with self (beta = .15,  $p < .05$ ). Although relation with God showed a beta value of .12, it missed significance as  $p = .071$ .

*Among RE students.* Based on an inspection of correlation values, self-improvement, nature and religious activities were entered at Step1, explaining 35% of the variance in the lived experience of Environmental SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 77.7%,  $F(8,128) = 55.9$ ,  $p < .001$ , with six control measures being statistically significant, namely ideals for Environmental SWB (beta = .44,  $p < .001$ ), relationship with others (beta = .24,  $p < .01$ ), nature (beta = .21,  $p < .001$ ), relationship with God (beta = .21,  $p < .01$ ), help from university (beta = .12,  $p < .01$ ) and religious activities (beta = -.14,  $p < .01$ ).

### **Transcendental SWB**

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess contributions made to Transcendental SWB by gender and the helps listed above (at Step 1), perceived help university (at Step 2), by other domains of lived experience (at Step 3) and ideals for Transcendental SWB (at Step 4).

*Among Divinity students.* Based on an inspection of correlation values, family and helping others were entered at Step1, explaining 26% of the variance in the lived experience of Transcendental SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 56.2%,  $F(5,116) = 29.7$ ,  $p < .001$ , with three control measures being statistically significant, namely relationship with self (beta = .45,  $p < .001$ ), ideals for Transcendental SWB (beta = .22,  $p < .01$ ) and help from university (beta = .19,  $p < .01$ ).

*Among RE students.* Based on an inspection of independent t-tests and correlation values, self-improvement and religious activities were entered at Step1, explaining 18% of the variance in the lived experience of Transcendental SWB. The total variance explained by the final model was 68.8%,  $F(8,128) = 35.3$ ,  $p < .001$ , with three control measures being statistically significant, namely relationship with self (beta

= .69,  $p < .001$ ), ideals for Transcendental SWB (beta = .14,  $p < .01$ ) and help from university (beta = .12,  $p < .05$ ). It may seem strange that prayer and scripture did not feature as significant contributors to variance in Transcendental SWB, but variance was not shown because 95% of the students scored 'high' or 'very high' on these two items.

### **Comparing importance of religion with spirituality**

Other studies have shown spirituality to be of greater importance than religion to university students in Western (Fisher, Barnes & Marks, 2009) and Eastern cultures (Fisher & Wong, 2013). However here, among Islamic students in Turkey, the reverse is true for females ( $t(259) = 2.77$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Religious Education students ( $t(259) = 3.25$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Importance of both religion and spirituality were rated very highly by these students (with values from 4.66 to 4.81 on a scale with maximum score of 5). These results also challenge the tentative finding proffered by Bryant (2007) that 'being Islamic has a significant negative effect on men's spirituality.'

## **Discussion**

It was not surprising to find religion being rated of higher importance than spirituality among Divinity and Religious Education students investigated here as it relates directly to their courses of study. These universities are, however, in Turkey, a country that is 'straddling secular and Islamic, modern and traditional, [that] wants to be Western yet tends to look eastwards' (Hasan, 2012). The findings run counter to other studies with less religious university students (Fisher, Barnes & Marks, 2009; Fisher & Wong, 2013). It would be valuable to study a wider sample of the Turkish population to see if they held similar views to the students studied here.

### **Personal SWB**

Relation with God showed greatest influence on how well both groups of university students related with themselves. This was to be expected as the Religious Education students' personal values are guided by their Islamic faith. Divinity students' focus on theology also points to relationship with God influencing personal development. For the Divinity students, their personal ideals provided additional help for developing their Personal SWB, as does university, even though rated fairly low by students.

Key differences between the two groups were revealed in that Religious Education students' relationship with other people had a large influence on their Personal SWB. This finding fits well with the Religious Education students' focus on moral values, which tie together with culture and religion, according to Tillich (1967, p.6), who claimed, 'Morality, culture and religion interpenetrate one another. They constitute the unity of the spirit, wherein the elements are distinguishable but not separable.'

At Step 1 in the hierarchical, multiple regression analysis, religious activity accounted for variance in Personal SWB for Divinity students, but this was overshadowed at Steps 2 and 3 by help from university and Communal, Environmental and Transcendental SWB. On the other hand, religious activity showed a persistent effect by accounting for a small yet significant amount of variance on Personal SWB for the Religious Education students from Step 1 through to Step 4. This was in accord with their report of greater help from religious activities compared with the Divinity students ( $t(257)=-2.5, p<.05$ ) (see Table 2).

### **Communal SWB**

University was seen to provide help for Divinity students' Communal SWB but not for Religious Education students, whose relationship with self had greater influence on the Communal SWB compared with Divinity students. This was in keeping with the high levels of correlation of relationships with themselves and other people discussed above.

It was somewhat surprising to note that relationship with the environment influenced Communal SWB for both groups, but relationship with God did not. It would be expected that, among highly religious students, relating with God should influence relationship with others, as well as self, as was shown above. However, religious activity made a small contribution to Religious Education students' Communal SWB. In keeping with the lack of God's influence on Divinity students' Communal SWB, religious activity was also found lacking in this regard.

### **Environmental SWB**

Divinity and Religious Education students' ideals provided greatest support for their relationship with environment. It is easy to see how nature itself provided additional support for both groups of students' Environmental SWB, but not so easy to see why relationship with other people did likewise. This finding is, however, consistent with the influence of Environmental SWB shown on Communal SWB above.

Variations were again noted between the two groups. Personal SWB related to Divinity students' Environmental SWB, but no significant influence was forthcoming either from university or God. The reverse was found for the Religious Education students.

### **Transcendental SWB**

Similar results were found between the Divinity and Religious Education students. Greatest help came from their relation with self, with additional support being provided by their ideals for relating with God. The help that would be expected from these universities for Divinity and Religious Education students to relate with God was also found to be present.

### **Follow up studies**

Results presented here are self-reports. It would be advisable for the university staff to enquire further of their students about the nature of help they find useful in supporting their spiritual well-being. Objective assessments of the quality of relationships in the four areas could also ascertain the congruence between students' stated and lived realities. For example, how do they express meaning, purpose and peace in life? How well do they show compassion, trust and forgiveness toward others? How and how well do they connect with the environment and with God?

Other research has shown a relationship between professionals' lived experience of SWB and the level of help they provide to clients (Fisher, 2009). This project provides a sound base from which to follow up these university students in one to two years' time to see how well their stated ideals and lived experience of SWB translate into helping students in schools (for the Religious Education students) and community members in religious settings (for the Divinity students). It would be useful to compare these results with those from other cultures. They would also help assess the effectiveness of the universities' holistic education.

### **Conclusion**

Consideration of research question 1 showed gender to have a slight influence among Religious Education students, but other demographic variables yielded no significant explanation of variance on any of the four domains of SWB investigated here.

High ideals and lived experiences were reported for spiritual well-being by these Islamic Divinity and Religious Education students in Turkey. Ideals were shown to underpin the lived experiences of both groups of students in each of four domains of spiritual well-being. The Religious Education students outscored their Divinity counterparts on the lived experience of all but Environmental SWB.

In answer to research question 2, the most highly rated nominated helps (particularly prayer and scripture) did not help explain variance in the SWB of these Divinity and Religious Education students, because nearly all of them were clustered on 'high' and 'very high' scores. It appears that these highly religious students tend to overstate the influence of prayer and scripture on their spiritual well-being. However, relating with God significantly accounted for variance on Personal SWB for both groups of students, as well as Environmental SWB for Religious Education, but not Divinity students. In contrast, relating with God appeared to have no significant influence on either group for Communal SWB. Whereas religious activities provided consistently small influence on the Personal, Communal and Environmental SWB of the Religious Education students, but not their relation with God, no lasting significant

influence was found from religious activities on any of the four domains of SWB among the Divinity students.

Investigating research question 3 showed that the universities provided small yet significant support in developing all but Environmental SWB for these Divinity students. Universities also provided support for Religious Education students' Personal, Environmental and Transcendental SWB. This did not hold true for Communal SWB, as Personal SWB overshadowed the universities' influence in this area.

Overall, this study has shown many similarities, yet some significant variations in spiritual well-being, between these Islamic Divinity and Religious Education students in Turkey. Further studies are warranted to determine the influence of these students' SWB on the clients they will serve after graduating and gaining employment (Fisher, 2009)

As well as assessing ideals and lived experiences for spiritual well-being with SHALOM, a third response was used in this study to provide a snapshot of perceived help provided for spiritual well-being among Divinity and Religious Education students by universities in Turkey. A longitudinal study using SHALOM, comparing students on entry and exit to courses, as well as in transition through their programs of study, would help universities to gauge if, how, and how well, they value-add to the spiritual development of their students. The long-term influence of universities could also be compared with effects on students' lives outside of university, for their spiritual well-being. This study has shown that Divinity and Religious Education students ascribe assistance to the development of aspects of their spiritual well-being by their universities. Further enquiry is needed to uncover the exact nature of help so ascribed and at what stage in students' progress (e.g., a particular course, time, or religious event?) compared with significant life events (e.g., relationship formation or breakdown, marriage, birth or death in the family).

It is especially important for Divinity and Religious Education students to have enhanced spiritual well-being, because previous studies have indicated that lived experience of a teacher, or carer, impacts on the quality of spiritual care provided to clients (Kennedy & Duncan, 2006; Fisher, 2008, 2009). With this in mind, staff in universities would also do well to investigate their own spiritual well-being (using SHALOM) and its impact on that of their students, because as they nurture their students' spiritual well-being, they are likely to enhance their own (Palmer, 1998).

## Notes on contributors

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